



CSBG Success Story

Please submit success story to Jessica Simon at jessica.simon@commerce.wa.gov. If you have questions, contact Jessica at 360-725-2850. Due Date: The 10th of the month the story is due.

Date:	April 9, 2010
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Organization Name:	Opportunity Council (Island, San Juan, Whatcom Counties)
Contact Person/Title:	Sheri Emerson
Contact E-mail:	sher_i_emerson@oppco.org
Contact Phone #:	360-734-5121 ext. 301

1. Success Story is for:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARRA <input type="checkbox"/> FFY 09 (skip to question 8) <input type="checkbox"/> FFY 10 (skip questions 6 & 7)
2. CSBG Project Name:	Virtual Furniture Bank
3. Total Project Budget:	\$35,000
4. Total CSBG Amount of Budget:	\$22,730
5. Number of total clients expected to serve, with all funds for the project:	120 households. This brand new program served 20 households in the first quarter and doubled that to serve 40 households in the second quarter. We can conservatively expect this program to serve 120 households in its first year.
6. Number of ARRA jobs expected to be created/retained as a result of this project:	.25
7. Number of ARRA jobs actually created/retained as a result of this project to date:	.25
8. Brief project/activity description:	Develop a virtual furniture bank to serve people who were homeless and recently housed.
9. How will this project help clients, build community, and form new partnerships? What aspects of the project would you like to share with the public:	
<p>Note: The following press release is courtesy of the Whatcom Volunteer Center.</p> <p>Everyone in Whatcom County deserves a bed to sleep in, a couch to relax on and a table to eat at.</p> <p>To make this happen, Whatcom Volunteer Center and the Opportunity Council are partnering to create House 2 Home Network, a virtual furniture bank that is one of the first of its kind in the country. It serves people who were homeless and recently housed through the Whatcom Homeless Service Center.</p> <p>While most furniture banks require expensive warehouse or storage space, House 2 Home Network is completely virtual. As donors call or email with items to donate, Rebecca Rayner, the furniture bank coordinator, links a volunteer with the opportunity to pick up the item and deliver it to the customer's new</p>	

home.

“House 2 Home Network is unique – we’re doing a furniture bank in a way no one has ever done before,” Rayner said. “We’re excited to help people get furniture and get back on their feet in their new home.” The furniture bank’s biggest needs are beds, couches and dining sets, as well as volunteers with trucks to deliver furniture. These furniture basics help provide stability in people’s lives, allowing them to focus on other aspects of their lives, such as finding a job or going back to school.

House 2 Home Network — Virtual Furniture Bank Client Success Story from Opportunity Council

Sam and Monica came to the Opportunity Council to ask about getting some rental assistance. They had found a place to rent and just needed assistance with the move in costs. Monica is on a fixed income each month and Sam is currently looking for work while collecting unemployment. They were sleeping on the couches of different friends and family and hoping to find a place of their own soon as they would be welcoming a new baby into their lives. Monica was seven months pregnant and desperate to be in her own space. Unfortunately their original housing option fell through and we had to work as a team to find new housing. Monica has some criminal barriers and Sam's credit was not very good. Working with their case manager at the OC we were able to secure a small apartment for them and they were thrilled to finally have a place of their own.

During a conversation with Sam, he mentioned how concerned he was because while they had a roof over their head, they didn't have any place to sit or sleep. Their income was tight and they had to be able to maintain their monthly rent and utilities as well as save for the baby, so they couldn't spend their money on new or even slightly used furniture.

Fortunately there was an excellent new resource that could help with this, the House 2 Home Network. The couple completed a form listing the items they needed for their new home, including a sofa, bed, plus utensils and cookware. Our staff sent the form off to the H2H Network and Sam and Monica went on their way. We followed up with them over the next two weeks as they settled into their home and then went on a home visit to talk with them. Our staff provided this report:

“As I walked into their living room Monica was beaming. During the visit she expressed the relief she felt to be in their own place before their baby arrived and how nice their home feels. I was impressed myself by the good quality of the furniture and how Monica and Sam had made use of it. I asked her about the furniture we were sitting on and she said, ‘isn't it wonderful, it is such nice stuff.’ She then pointed out the different items that had been delivered through the H2H Network and expressed her gratitude for being linked with that service. She also told me how much she loved the coffee table she had gotten and how nice it was. She had even put out some pictures of her and Sam on it to display proudly.”

Sam and Monica have now been in housing for two months they have been able to maintain their rent payments and have turned their apartment into a welcoming home for their new baby. A large part of that was being able to get furniture in really nice condition delivered to their door free of charge so their money could be spent on their housing and their brand new baby girl.

